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PROFESSOR C. C. TORREY ON THE *ACTS*

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Dr. Torrey has produced a work¹ which, though contained in a little treatise of seventy-two pages, may well be an epoch-making contribution to our knowledge of Acts. He has undertaken to demonstrate two things: first, that Acts 1-15 35 is directly traceable to an Aramaic source which Luke translated; secondly, that the rest of the book is the work of one author.

This implies that we must revise all our previous ideas of the date not only of Acts, but of the written synoptic tradition. We must give up all theories of "sources," all ideas that Acts is in any sense a *Tendenz-Schrift*, and must subscribe to the orthodox assertion that Acts was completed by A.D. 64, and that Luke when he wrote was ignorant of what had happened to Paul after his two years' captivity at Rome. We must, naturally, acknowledge that Luke owes nothing to Josephus; on the contrary, if there was any borrowing, Josephus, who wrote his *Antiquities* at least thirty years after the Acts, was indebted to Luke. We must further postulate that the story of Acts 1-15 existed in its present form in an Aramaic document as early as A.D. 50, and that to Luke it was so important—I had almost said so sacred—that he did not presume to alter a word when he made his literal translation. Such are the consequences of Dr. Torrey's theory which we now proceed to examine.

Dr. Torrey's method is thoroughly sound. He may deduce more than his investigations warrant; but when

¹ The Composition and Date of the Acts. Harvard Theological Studies, No. 1. Harvard University Press, 1916.

he subjects a Greek verse or phrase to criticism he does not do so without good reason, and his knowledge of Aramaic is such that few could presume to call it in question.

The three chapters are entitled:

- I. The Aramaic Source of Acts.
- II. The Integrity of the Second Half of Acts.
- III. The Relation of II Acts and I Acts.

In chapter 1 Dr. Torrey shows why, in his opinion, in "the first fifteen chapters the language is translation-Greek." He begins by collecting a formidable array of Semitisms extending over the chapters from 1 1 to 15 23. He declares that these idioms are specifically not Hebrew but obviously Aramaic. He admits that some of them are traceable in the later parts of Acts, but urges that these are probably part of the Koinè language, which is obviously being used. Acts 1-15 35 ff. does not sound like the Koinè. It is translation-language, like 1 Mac-cabees, etc., and it cannot be that Luke is trying to write in the style of the LXX, for Acts 15 36-28 *fin.* is not at all in this style. Dr. Torrey is of opinion that Acts 1-15 35 was in Palestinian Aramaic, the language of Judæa as compared with the northern Aramaic dialect. He admits that we do not know much of this Palestinian variety; but he endeavors to use it as the basis of re-translation, taking as his models the fragments we have, the Targum of Onkelos, and the documents preserved in the Hebrew Ezra, etc.

Here are a few passages which are taken to prove the Aramaic origin of chapters 1-15 35:

Acts 2 47: ὁ δὲ Κύριος προσετίθει τοὺς σωζομένους καθ' ἡμέραν ἐπὶ τὸ αὐτὸ. The last three words are usually taken as "together" or "in the same place." In Biblical Hebrew they would be equivalent to יחד. This makes sense in Luke 17 35, Acts 1 15, 4 26; cf. Ps. 2 2. But it does not make sense here. In the Textus Receptus and the A. V. an attempt

is made to get rid of the difficulty by connecting it with 3 1. Cod. D has ἐπὶ τὸ αὐτὸ τῇ ἐκκλησίᾳ. But retranslation into the Palestinian dialect explains it all; לַחֲדָא in it means "greatly." Thus the literal translation would be, "The Lord added to those that are saved daily greatly," that is, the number of converts rapidly increased; but Luke's ignorance of Palestinian Aramaic made him translate לַחֲדָא as if it were יַחְדָּי.

Acts 3 16: Καὶ ἐπὶ τῇ πίστει τοῦ ὀνόματος αὐτοῦ, τοῦτον δὲ θεωρεῖτε καὶ οἴδατε, ἐστερέωσεν τὸ ὄνομα αὐτοῦ · καὶ ἡ πίστις ἣ δι' αὐτοῦ ἔδωκεν αὐτῷ τὴν ὁλοκληρίαν ταύτην ἀπέναντι πάντων ὑμῶν. Here we have a very clumsily worded passage; note the ugly repetition of ὄνομα. Dr. Torrey's explanation is extremely ingenious: Luke read the Aramaic תְּקַן שְׁמֵהּ אֵיזֵר ἐστερέωσεν τὸ ὄνομα αὐτοῦ instead of תְּקַן שְׁמֵהּ "made him whole." The verse would then read consistently and intelligibly, "Yea, the faith which is through Him hath given him this soundness."

Acts 4 25: The prayer of the disciples, containing the hopelessly unintelligible words ὁ τοῦ πατρὸς ἡμῶν διὰ πνεύματος ἁγίου στόματος Δαυεὶδ παιδὸς σου εἰπών. No scholar has ever made sense of this jumble of words. But in Aramaic they would be אָמַר הוּא דִּי אַבְנָא לְפִיָּם רִיחָא דִּי קֹדְשָׁא דִּי רִיד עֲבָדָא. The rendering of the feminine דִּיֵּא ought to be, "That which our father David, thy servant, said by the mouth of the Holy Spirit." The manner of Luke in sticking close to a difficult Aramaic text is, according to Dr. Torrey, characteristic of this writer as a translator.

Somewhat less convincing is the treatment of

Acts 8 10: οὗτός ἐστιν ἡ δύναμις τοῦ θεοῦ ἡ καλουμένη μεγάλη. How are we to account for the presence of καλουμένη? True, Gnostic formulæ speak of a μεγάλη δύναμις. "But this," says Dr. Torrey, "is quite outside the atmosphere of the book of Acts; nor have we any reason for supposing that

the people of Samaria were a Gnostic community." Klostermann thinks that may be a transliteration of מְגִלָּה, "revealing." The main difficulty, however, says Dr. Torrey, lies in τοῦ θεοῦ. He reminds us that Samaria was not Samaritan. As Wellhausen says, "The city of Samaria remained heathen and did not belong to the Samaritan community." Philip therefore was preaching in a town where people believed in gods many and lords many. "What deity could the people of Sebaste have designated ὁ θεός?" I confess I do not see the force of these objections, and before showing how Dr. Torrey answers them, I should like to ask if they really present a difficulty. Καλουμένη occurs in Acts 9 11: τὴν ῥύμην τὴν καλουμένην εἰθεΐαν, and we have the θύρα λεγούνη ὥραια (3 2). It is also quite possible that in Samaria there was a Gnostic community, especially if Sebaste, which, as Wellhausen says, *blieb heidnisch*, is the scene of Philip's meeting with Simon. But we cannot argue both ways at once; either Sebaste is meant by τὴν πόλιν τῆς Σαμαρίας or it is not. In the former case a Gnostic community is possible; in the latter ὁ θεός presents no difficulty. I venture to think the whole context is against the implication that Philip preached in a heathen city. A mission to heathen at this stage is inconceivable. Simon is not said in Acts to have amazed the Gentiles, whatever he may have done later, but τὸ ἔθνος τῆς Σαμαρίας. The Apostles hear that Samaria has received the word (14). After the discomfiture of Simon they evangelize πολλὰς κώμας τῶν Σαμαρειτῶν. The Samaritans meant are clearly the schismatical nation which practised the law of Moses. Otherwise the necessity of Peter needing a vision before he could go to the uncircumcised Cornelius is pointless, and a serious objection to the unity of these chapters, for which Dr. Torrey contends so earnestly, is provided.

But I must turn from the delightful task of showing a slight blemish in the argument of a friend and colleague

to return to a field where I can offer no criticism. The verse rendered into Aramaic would read as follows: **רַב מְתַקְרָא דִּי אֱלֹהָא דִּי חֵילָא דִּי** which Dr. Torrey admits to be ambiguous, for, **אֱלֹהָא** being masculine, it may be rendered *αὐτῇ*, "this;" *οὗτός* is also possible: "This man is the power of God *τοῦ καλουμένου μεγάλου*." "The Great God" is, of course, the God of the Jews. "In early Syriac 'Rabbā' is occasionally used absolutely as his title."

We now come to a passage which Dr. Torrey considers "one of the most satisfactory of all in the proof of translation which it affords." In 11 28 the famine foretold by Agabus was to be *ἐφ' ὅλην τὴν οἰκουμένην*. Cf. Luke 11 1, *ἀπογράφεσθαι πᾶσαν τὴν οἰκουμένην*. In both cases *οἰκουμένη* means the whole Roman empire; and neither the famine nor the enrolment affected, so far as we know, more than Palestine. In an Aramaic document we should have **כל ארעא**. This a translator would naturally render by *οἰκουμένη*, "all the earth." But why should Luke not have used *ἡ γῆ* if he had supposed the famine to be confined to Palestine and not to be universal?

To these passages Dr. Torrey adds other evidence, some of which is as cogent as any hitherto adduced, and I must reluctantly content myself with selecting only a few specimens.

(1) Acts 14: The difficult word *συναλιζόμενος* is the exact rendering of **מתמלח** an *Ithpa'al*, meaning to eat salt in company with. The *Pe'al* is found in Ezra 4 14. This verb is used in the Harklean Syriac. The *Ithpa'al* is only known to us in the Northern Syriac dialect.

(2) The employment of the words *ῥεξατο* (1 1), *ἀρξάμενος* (1 22, Luke 23 5, Acts 10 37). Of this Dr. Torrey says, "We see exemplified in a very striking way Luke's cautious faithfulness leading him to the employment of translation-Greek of the stiffest type."

(3) 2 24: *ᾠδίνες θανάτου*. Luke uses *λύσας* in connection with this. It is a most unsuitable word; but in Ps. 17 5, 145 3, *ᾠδίνες* is used to translate *חבלי*, "bands of." Thus Luke must have had an Aramaic document with *חבליא*.

(4) 10 36 f.: This is a specially striking passage. In the first place, it occurs in a chapter which many pronounce to be a free Lukan composition, and it also has a very great theological significance. *Διὰ Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ οὗτός ἐστι πάντων Κύριος* is a very strong expression for that age, and especially for Palestine. It would even have needed qualification at a much later date, for it appears to make Jesus Christ equal to the Father. Dr. Torrey suggests that *οὗτος* is not Jesus, but is the Aramaic *הוּא*, "this," and that it is the subject of the verb "sent": "As for the word which this Lord of all sent to the children of Israel, etc."

It is noteworthy that some examples of translation-Greek in the section Acts 13–15 35 are taken from the 13th chapter: verses 1, *τὴν οὔσαν ἐκκλησίαν*; 22, 24, 25 (*ter*). The last three are from the sermon at Pisidian Antioch. In chapter 14 there are only two examples: verse 17 (*ἐμπιπλῶν τροφῆς καὶ εὐφροσύνης τὰς καρδίας ὑμῶν*), and verse 27—the use of *μετά*, which occurs also in 15 4, in the sense of *עם*, a preposition commonly connected with *עבר*, meaning "to do to" anyone. I consider the place of these alleged Aramaisms significant. Taking into account Luke's use of *οὔσα* and also that of Paul, it is difficult to consider its use in Acts 13 1 important; nor do I think that much weight attaches to those in chapter 14. There remains therefore only the Sermon, of which an Aramaic report may have been preserved.

Only the first thirty-five verses of chapter 15 come under discussion, as the second section of Acts commences with 15 36. All the Aramaisms are taken between 15 16 and 23—the relation of the speeches and events of

the Apostolic council, which may have been in Aramaic. The suggestion which Professor G. F. Moore has given Dr. Torrey of the difficult phrase *τούτων τῶν ἐπάναγκες* (15 28) is interesting. He thinks the *τῶν* may be due to a dit-tography, and that a stop should be placed after *τούτων*. Then we should read, "to lay upon you no further burthen, except these: *ἐπάναγκες ἀπεχέσθαι ἐδωλοθύτων*."

Such then is Dr. Torrey's argument. It is, as all will admit, very suggestive, and is packed with valuable helps to exegesis. That of 2 47 seems to me most ingenious. By his extensive knowledge of Aramaic dialects he has succeeded in explaining a very difficult phrase in a simple and probable manner, and the conclusion that an Aramaic original is at the back of this and other strange expressions is too strong for me to deny. But this is only part of Dr. Torrey's task, which is to demonstrate satisfactorily the absolute unity of the Aramaic document, which an author like Luke, whom he admits possessed great literary versatility, translated with such conscientious fidelity that he preserved its very errors, even those which must have been obvious to him.

The second chapter of our treatise must receive less attention than it deserves. In it Dr. Torrey points out the marked difference in the style from that of 1-15 35, the change in the Christology, and the impossibility of the Council of Jerusalem in Acts 15 having been so described by a companion of Paul's. But does not Dr. Torrey ignore the difficulty of accounting for a close friend of Paul's having incorporated into his narrative so damaging a statement as that relating to the proceedings of the Apostles and the promulgation of the letter to the churches of Syria and Cilicia? The main part of the chapter is, however, devoted to showing that Harnack's view, that 27 9-11 is by a later hand, cannot be maintained, and to exposing the fallacy of Norden's theory of Paul's Areopagus speech in Acts 17. It is to

be regretted that he does not deal with a far more serious objection, that of the integrity of the last part of Acts—the problem of reconciling Acts 28 17 *ad fin.* with all that is elsewhere known of Paul's attitude towards the Jewish leaders. How could a disciple of Paul who knew of the Epistles to the Romans, make the Jewish elders of Rome ignorant not only of his existence but of that of the Christian sect?

The third chapter — the relation of II Acts to I Acts — deals with three points: (1) Old Testament quotation and language in Acts; (2) the homogeneity of the Aramaic document; (3) the probable date of Acts.

In dealing with the first, Dr. Torrey points out that while there are, according to Westcott and Hort 94, and according to Nestle 83 quotations from the Old Testament in I Acts, there are only 4 in II Acts. From this he infers that Luke knew very little about the Old Testament till later in life, and its words and phrases did not come readily to his pen. It is open to inquiry whether the theme of II Acts lent itself to Old Testament quotation; and whether Acts 26 — the speech of Agrippa — is one on which the conclusion that I Acts is translation-Greek and II Acts free composition can be maintained. Agrippa, it is true, was a Jew and an observer of the law; but would a speech like the sermon at Pisidian Antioch have been suitable? The sermon was suitable to a synagogue and the speech to a law court in the presence of a Roman procurator and a Hellenized Hebrew king.

Before conceding the homogeneity of the Aramaic document, it would be necessary to enter very minutely into questions of sources, and to discuss Harnack's theory of Acts 2 being a β source while Acts 3 and 4 is an α one, both referring to the same event, not to mention other examples of doublets and inconsistencies. In this section, however, Dr. Torrey has, I think, proved his

thesis "that there is no introductory paragraph, though we are led to expect one." The opening sentence, τὸν μὲν πρῶτον λόγον ἐποίησάμην περὶ πάντων, ὦ Θεόφιλε, has no ending; and Luke, after writing these words, began to translate his Aramaic document, which began thus: "After (בתר) all that Jesus did and taught, up to the day when he gave commandment to the Apostles whom he had chosen by the Holy Spirit, and was taken up; to whom, etc."

When the main contentions of Dr. Torrey are conceded — namely, that I Acts and II Acts are each single homogeneous documents, combined together by Luke, the companion of Paul — the rest follows as a matter of course. I Acts must be a very early document, and Luke may have completed it after making his translation by adding his own experiences when a fellow traveller of Paul. The objections are familiar ones but to us of secondary interest. They are (a) that the Third Gospel was written after A.D. 70. Dr. Torrey shows that Luke 21 is a tissue of Old Testament quotations and thinks that it may well be prophetic; (b) Luke's indebtedness to Josephus, of which Dr. Torrey admits but two "correspondences" worthy of serious attention — Acts 5 36, cf. Jos. *Antiq.* XX, 5, 1; and Luke 3 1, cf. *Antiq.* XX, 7, 1 (Lysanias). His discussion of them is fair and ingenious, but it requires much more than the two pages or so which is all that is devoted to it.

It will take many judgments before a final decision can be given as to Dr. Torrey's case being proved. Mine is at best that of a judge of a court of first instance. That there were Aramaic sources for I Acts I feel convinced by the arguments presented to us. That nothing but Aramaic sources were used is, I consider, "not proven." That there was only one document appears to me extremely doubtful. That Luke translated this with meticulous accuracy, adding nothing of importance of his

own and adapting nothing to prove those points which he desired to establish, is, judging by his use of Mark and Q, to me at least incredible. I admit that there is a marked difference between the Greek of 1-12 and 16 36 *ad fin.*; but I am not so certain about 13-14, 15 1-35, except in some definite sections. I am, however, convinced that it is impossible to say with any degree of positiveness that Luke, the companion of Paul, was the final redactor of Acts, or that Acts, as we have it, comes from a Pauline source. My judgment may be reversed with my full but regretful consent when the case comes before judges of a higher court, the Supreme Court of New Testament scholars. But they will not reverse my final pronouncement that Dr. Torrey has done a great service to scholarship by promulgating his theory; and "right or wrong," he deserves the thanks of the learned world.